

# CHANGING IRELAND

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT - COLLECTIVE ACTION - EMPOWERMENT - SOCIAL INCLUSION - [www.changingireland.ie](http://www.changingireland.ie)

## EQUALITY FOR WOMEN: **Are We There Yet?** WEXFORD WOMEN RISING



### INSIDE:

- Social farming
- Pride of Place
- Social enterprise
- Suffragette history
- #MeToo
- Community shops
- The Smiling Coast
- Moneylending
- Brilliant books from Senan, Lisa & Seamus

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This publication is produced by Changing Ireland Community Media CLG, an independent, not-for-profit NGO funded through the Department of Rural and Community Development.



## INDEPENDENT

'Changing Ireland' is an independent not-for-profit publication.

## ABOUT US

'Changing Ireland' engages in original journalism to highlight the impact of local and community development and social inclusion work across Ireland. We report on action on the ground and provide a space for reflection on what serves people and communities best.

The magazine was established in 2001, is based in Moyross, Limerick, and is core-funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development.

We produce journalism to reflect social inclusion work funded or supported by Government departments and agencies. We provide a platform for those on the ground in communities.

We are dedicated to promoting social justice, equality and fair play and to giving people who are rarely heard a voice.

We hope our style of journalism provides encouragement to workers, activists and volunteers nationwide, including civil and public servants and all involved in social inclusion in Ireland today.

See page 6 for information about the team behind 'Changing Ireland'.

## SUPPORT

'Changing Ireland' generates a small amount of social enterprise revenue. It is core-funded by Government since 2001, receiving support from the:



An Roinn Forbartha  
Tuaithe agus Pobail  
Department of Rural and  
Community Development

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## FRONT COVER PHOTOS

Our main photo shows students from secondary schools in Co. Wexford attending the 'Are We There Yet?' conference organised by Wexford Local Development. Also: Emily Logan speaking at the conference. Conference photos courtesy of Ger Lawlor Photography. W: <http://www.wexfordportraits.com>

Btm right: All smiles in Busumbala, The Gambia. Photo by Lamin Sanyang.

# She's growing up with **CHANGING IRELAND**

Changing Ireland Community Media Ltd



**What a difference 15 months make when you're our youngest reader!**

Thanks to the mum and dad whose child has become a poster child. Their magazine comes through the letterbox and there's now a race to see who can get it first!





# COMMUNITY: Resilience

## No chocs if your group commits to Lisa's 30-day food challenge

BY ALLEN MEAGHER

"Do you know only 1 per cent of Irish farmers grow vegetables?" Lisa Fingleton asked me in Kerry the other day. I was down to see her farm.

"It's the lowest in the EU," she added. The data comes from Eurostats.

I didn't know. I've a cousin a farmer and I live in a rural area surrounded by farms. But I was ignorant, I had to confess.

Lisa is big on community resilience and growing our own food. She wants communities to test their resilience.

One day about three years ago, Lisa had a profound 'moment'. She stopped at a petrol station and bought a BLT sandwich. She was eating on the run as busy folk do.

This time, for some reason, she turned to the ingredients and found there were over 40 listed and they were from all over the world. There was much more than simply bacon, lettuce and tomato in the BLT.

She began to picture in her mind the journeys all the ingredients make to end up in a sambo on a shelf in a petrol station in Kerry.

"It felt like this sandwich connected me to so many places, people, plants and animals from all over the planet. I started to think about the energy needed to bring this sandwich to me; all the electricity, fuel and water," she said.

She pictured the waste. Lisa had been to Borneo and witnessed the destruction of the rainforest first-hand, for palm oil plantations.

Today, Lisa credits the BLT sandwich with pushing her to make a film, hold an exhibition and, most recently - in November - publish a book. She is reaching out to communities to wise up and warning the government that we are overly dependent on imports. The system favours sales over sustainability.

"I learned a lot from that BLT. It made me question if there is really any such thing as 'cheap food'? Someone, somewhere is paying the price in terms of poor conditions for workers, crowded conditions for battery hens or health implications for the consumers of processed foods.

"I am concerned about the fact that we are importing so much of our food and losing the capacity to be self sufficient, despite what we know about climate change and carbon footprint," she said.

Years ago, imported food was a luxury, an occasional indulgence. Once a year, you might get to eat an orange. Today, we have year-round strawberries thanks to global inequality and a total disregard for the environment as Tesco, Dunnes, etc, fly in fruit for the rich Irish.

Thanks to Lisa, we know now there is another way. But could you or your community group do the 30-day challenge? Could you live only on food grown locally for a month?

Lisa began the '30 Day Local Food Challenge' by planning it out and doing it herself and now others have joined in.

"We eat only ingredients grown on the island of Ireland. That means doing without imported goods such as sugar, bananas, chocolate and other luxuries to which we have become accustomed.

"It's a great way to eat good food, support local food producers and become more resilient," she said.

Why the book?

"Groups around the country started inviting me to give talks and workshops on eating local food. It wasn't possible to meet everyone, so I wrote a book," she said.

The book was launched recently by former minister, Jimmy Deenihan, as chairperson of Listowel Food Fair.

Find out more about Lisa's book on the next page.



### GUIDELINES FOR THE 30 DAY FOOD CHALLENGE

I decided that the challenge would only include food so I could drink what I wanted.

I would eat only food that was 100% grown and produced on the island of Ireland. All the ingredients would be Irish with a 5% margin in the event of extreme hunger.

If someone offered me food, on the basis that it was Irish, I would accept it.

I also decided to share what happened each day online and invited other people to take part.

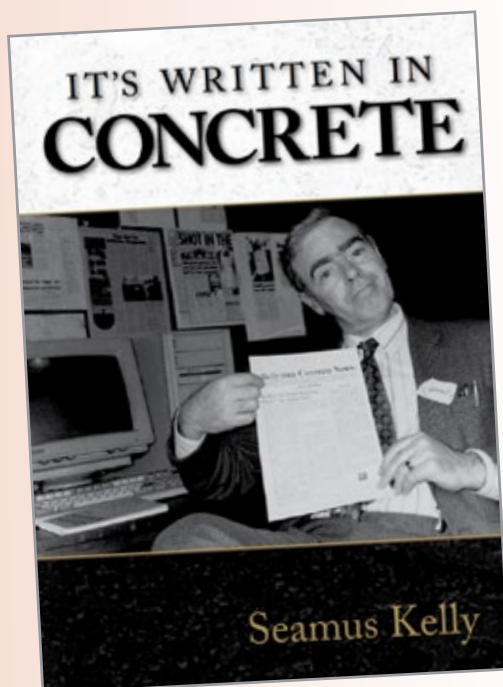
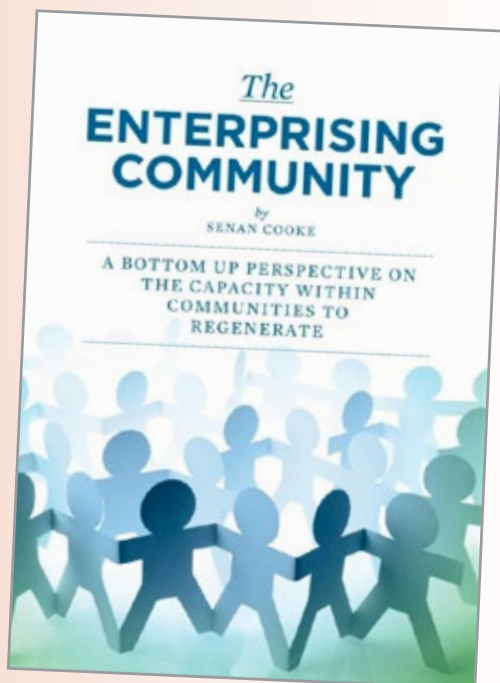
#### WHAT'S OUT?

BANANAS	<input type="checkbox"/>
ORANGES	<input type="checkbox"/>
CHOCOLATE	<input type="checkbox"/>
SUGAR	<input type="checkbox"/>
ALL IMPORTED FOOD *	<input type="checkbox"/>
RICE	<input type="checkbox"/>
PASTA	<input type="checkbox"/>
LENTILS	<input type="checkbox"/>
NUTS	<input type="checkbox"/>
GINGER	<input type="checkbox"/>
SPIES	<input type="checkbox"/>
AVOCADO	<input type="checkbox"/>

#### WHAT DO WE GROW?

SPUDS	<input type="checkbox"/>
CARROTS	<input type="checkbox"/>
ONIONS	<input type="checkbox"/>
GARLIC	<input type="checkbox"/>
KALE	<input type="checkbox"/>
CABBAGE	<input type="checkbox"/>
TOMATOES	<input type="checkbox"/>
LEEKS	<input type="checkbox"/>
CHILLIS	<input type="checkbox"/>
APPLES	<input type="checkbox"/>
RASBERRIES	<input type="checkbox"/>
BLACKCURRANTS	<input type="checkbox"/>
HERBS (OREGANO, BASIL, THYME, MINT)	<input type="checkbox"/>





# GOOD READING FOR

Thinking of buying a book?  
Here are three beauties!



**Author:** Lisa Fingleton.

**Title:** The Local Food Project.

**Price:** €13, including postage. **Published:** November, 2018.

**Pages:** 62.

**About the author:** A film-maker, artist, farmer, development worker, musician. Lives in Kerry, originally from Laois.

**What's it about?** Marketed as "an inspiring book about the power of eating local food", it also is honest about the discomfort when you try to live only on fresh, locally-produced food.

**What are people saying about it?** It's just been published. But a short film Lisa produced on the same subject went down a treat.

Lisa wrote at the time about what she learned on her 30-day food adventure.

This is the first time she has gathered all her thoughts, diary entries and photographs from the exercise together in book format. Just in time for Xmas stockings!

**What's to like about it:** Colourful, an easy read. Makes important points on subjects many of us don't like to think about. Many photos. A wake-up call for Ireland.

**Note:** Between booklet and book - as much a pictorial account as a textbook.

**To buy, visit:** <http://lisafingleton.com/the-local-food-project>

**Or email:** [lisafingleton@gmail.com](mailto:lisafingleton@gmail.com)

# OR COMMUNITY ACTIVISTS

anytime soon? They make ideal presents.

- A.M.



**Author:** Senan Cooke.

**Title:** The Enterprising Community - A bottom-up perspective on the capacity within communities to regenerate.

**Price:** €20. **Published:** July, 2018.

**Pages:** 304.

**What's it about?** Setting up social enterprises. Creating jobs in communities. Rekindling the fire.

**About the author:** He commands respect among peers as an old hand on social enterprise and community development. Put his life's learning into this book. Hurlled for Kilkenny in his youth. Lives in Dunhill, Co. Waterford, with wife Helen.

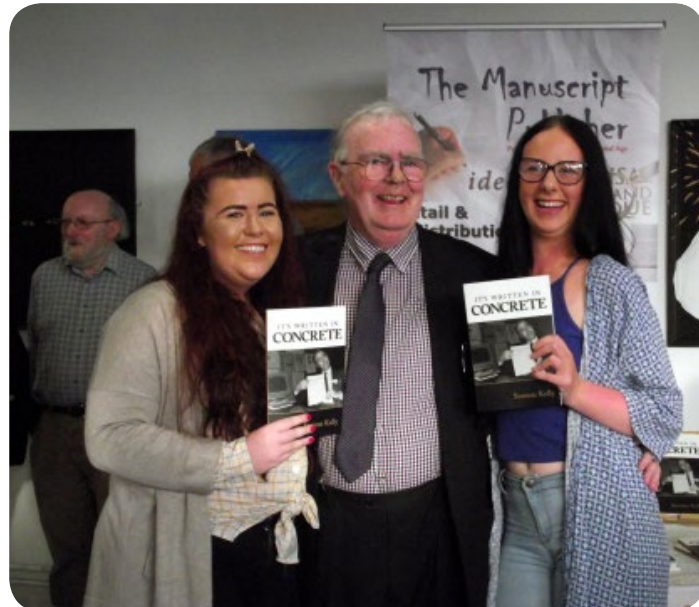
**What are people saying about it?** It comes V.I.P. recommended. Everyone from hurling legends to senior politicians to development workers like it.

**What's to like about it:** Colour photos. It has academic backing, yet it is easy to read. The author has managed to turn a how-to guide into a damn fine read. Every page gets you thinking. How often does a good read come along for people in Ireland involved in community work and volunteering? A book that is unlikely to be surpassed in its field for some time.

**Note:** The author looked at pre-existing communities. Cloughjordan's eco-village does not feature.

**To buy, email:** [theenterprisingcommunity@gmail.com](mailto:theenterprisingcommunity@gmail.com)

**Or phone in your order to Senan at:** 087-2228374.



**Author:** Seamus Kelly

**Title:** It's Written in Concrete.

**Price:** RRP €14.99. **Published:** June, 2018.

**Pages:** 162.

**What's it about?** Media / Ballymun / Overcoming adversity. Seamus started a community newsletter in 1998 that evolved into a weekly newspaper, 'Ballymun Concrete News'. It highlighted positive stories in Ballymun at a time when the area was negatively portrayed by the mainstream media. This is his story of what it's like to run a newspaper from the 10th floor of a tower block that most outsiders would fear to look at. It puts it up to the media to be positive and it tells Ballymun's history from the inside.

**What are people saying about it?**

"I remember being featured in Ballymun Concrete News. It was great to support Aslan and other local bands in the area." - Christy Dignam.

"In writing this book, Seamus wants to create a debate around the subject of Positive News. The debate has started." - Garda Chief Superintendent (retired) Karl Heller.

**What's to like about it:** The book is written by a seasoned journalist. It gives a fresh and positive insight into Ballymun life. Features 40 pages of colourful photos.

**To buy:**

1. Buy direct from: [www.TheManuscriptPublisher.com](http://www.TheManuscriptPublisher.com)
2. In local bookstores in Dublin, including Eason's.
3. Also available in all public libraries across Dublin.



## Are we there yet? - Hopes high from May, 2019



I picked the right course when I chose Sociology at UCC. At lectures about the Sociology of Work, I learned that we had grown up thinking that only paid work was real work.

Unpaid work usually done by women was not rated. Volunteering was not valued. Our minds had been poisoned by capitalist and chauvinistic thinking.

But the veil was lifted. Female emancipation now meant something real to us students. We could now see how the average woman at home worked 70 hours a week. We could see that most housewives, as they were called, performed a great variety of under-appreciated tasks. They ranged from cooking to cleaning, childminding, clothes washing and craftwork to counselling. And that was only some of the 'C' tasks.

We learned that, until 1973, women were often obliged to give up paid employment on marrying.

Today, according to Amnesty International, 104 countries still have laws preventing women working in specific jobs.

In Ireland, human rights campaigners have got really good at highlighting injustices past and present experienced by women. We've featured some of the campaigns in this magazine.

Recently, some asked 'Are We There Yet?' - in terms of human rights and equality. Women in Wexford attempted to answer the question.

They now hope, in Wexford, to see an increase in the level of female participation in local elections from May, 2019. They are taking action to encourage more women to stand. Let's hope it goes well.

Many reports in this edition focus heavily on the continuing fight to emancipate and empower women. Society as a whole will benefit from more female involvement in decision-making and female leadership within communities.

One such person is Lisa Fingleton who has written a book about a 30-day local food challenge she devised. If your community can follow her example, you could be doing more to tackle climate change than the government seems to be. The warnings are dire.

The names of many other strong leaders of community groups across Ireland come to mind.

Come to think of it, we in Ireland are in a reasonably good position now to act in greater solidarity with women abroad seeking basic rights.

The excellent development education work done by Lourdes Youth and Community Services (LYCS) in inner city Dublin springs to mind. They empowered local women by educating them about the plight of women in poverty in faraway countries. Worth looking up!

*Allen Meagher*

### FILE A REPORT FOR US!

If you believe in Community Development and enjoy writing, why not file a report for us about your community project and what makes it unique. 300-400 words is plenty (and a photo if possible). Certain criteria apply. Your first point of contact should be the editor.



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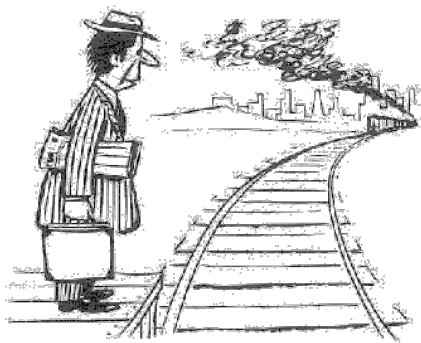
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### DISCLAIMER

The views expressed in this magazine are those of the author concerned. They do not, by any means, necessarily reflect the views of the editor, the editorial team, the voluntary management board of Changing Ireland Community Media CLG, or the Department of Rural & Community Development.



# NEWS BRIEFS



***What have you missed?***

## **INCREASE: €5.5M FOR CITY PROJECTS IN 2019**

**34 community groups currently supported by Dept.**

The government has increased its funding support for community groups in Dublin's north-east inner city (the NEIC).

The announcement was made in October by Ministers Michael Ring and Paschal Donohoe.

In 2018, 34 community groups in the area received approx. €3.5m from the Department of Rural and Community Development. For 2019, that figure is being increased by €2m to €5.5m.

Communities in the NEIC (there is no single name for the place) face the threat of gang violence, while drug addiction and poverty remain serious long-term issues.

Minister Ring joined finance minister Paschal Donohoe, who is a local TD, to visit Lourdes Day Care on Sean MacDermott St when making the announcement. The Centre is being extended and renovated with funding from Minister Ring's Department.

Two years ago, then Taoiseach, Enda Kenny, gave specific commitments to people in the area following a surge in gang-related murders.

For coverage from 2016, giving community views on the issues at the time, see: [https://is-suu.com/changingireland/docs/changing\\_ireland-summer\\_2016-lr](https://is-suu.com/changingireland/docs/changing_ireland-summer_2016-lr)

## **MEDICAL CARD EARN UP TO €22K WITHOUT FEAR**

**News welcomed by Federation**

Fear of losing a medical card was identified as "the single greatest barrier" to work in a government report called "Make Work Pay", published in 2017.

Now, that fear is gone. People with a medical card can now earn up to €22,204 without needing to worry. Previously, the limit stood at €6,204 per annum.

The social inclusion case for making the change is compelling. Over 26% of people with disabilities in Ireland live in consistent poverty, while 71% of people with a disability are not in work.

The announcement about the higher limit was made in the offices of the Disability Federation of Ireland, by Simon Harris, Minister for Health and Disabilities and Finian McGrath, Minister of State for Disability Issues.

One woman who "could not survive" without her medical card told of her joy at the news.

"It will enable me to do more", Patricia McCarthy, who has multiple disabilities, told DFI. "As it stands I'm always turning down work."

## **DEIRIC O'BROIN NEW POBAL CHAIR**

**Pobal boss Denis Leamy also in new seat**

Pobal has a new chair, Dr. Deiric O' Broin from Dublin City University. Seamus Boland of Irish Rural Link had been chair since 2011.

Meanwhile, Pobal's CEO, Denis Leamy, has been appointed chairperson of an important sub-committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The committee deals with Local Economic and Employment Development (LEED).

## **TOTAL GRANTS OF €40M Community Foundation of Ireland**

The Community Foundation for Ireland has reached the milestone of €40 million in grants since its establishment in 2000.

**More info: [communityfoundation.ie](http://communityfoundation.ie)**



## **BUILD THE HOUSES!**

**A Chara,**

There is currently enough land in state ownership to build more than 114,000 housing units. All that is required is that our political representatives step up to the plate.

There are over 9,500 citizens homeless today. This does not include people with disabilities who are in unsuitable accommodation such as nursing homes. It does not count those currently housed in domestic violence refuges. It leaves out almost 600 asylum-seekers granted leave to remain in Ireland who cannot leave direct provision because of the lack of affordable housing.

The Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) had 31,200 people on it in 2017. There are problems with HAP for those on the housing list - in accepting a HAP tenancy, people must agree to be removed from the Housing List.

HAP also represents a poor investment for the state. Reports indicate that the spiralling costs of rents mean that, in some areas, it would cost only 50% of projected HAP payments to build state-owned housing for the tenants. The state would then have an asset long into the future.

The millions being spent on hotels, bed and breakfast and on housing charities and NGOs would also be better used to build permanent decent housing for those who need it.

At present the state is spending €900 million per year of its housing budget on subsidising private landlords and homeless services. As reported by RTE, this is projected to increase to well over €2 billion per annum by 2022. This is a poor use of tax payer's money.

Instead, the state should commit itself to directly building social, affordable and cost-rental models of housing. Failure to do so is to commit to failing those experiencing homelessness now and those who will inevitably experience housing insecurity in the years ahead if immediate action is not taken. We have the finances and the land to resolve this.

**Yours Sincerely,  
Dermot Hayes,  
Ennis,  
Co. Clare.**





# You, #MeToo and the community of women

BY KIRSTY TOBIN

It wouldn't be much of a stretch to state with certainty that 2018 is the Year of the Woman. We all should have seen it coming.

In December 2017, 'Time' magazine announced 'The Silence Breakers' – the women (and men, but mostly women) who came forward to decry the endemic sexual harassment taking place in Hollywood. They became 'Time's Person of the Year. That set the tone.



2018 has been the year of #MeToo (although it first came to prominence in 2017, and was first used as a hashtag in 2006) and #TimesUp (which came into being on January 1st, 2018). This has been the year when women took strength from each other and collectively said, 'No more'.

A number of high-profile cases in Hollywood and in business, and the presence in the White House of President Donald J Trump, have inspired women to challenge the gender norms of being shrinking violets in conference rooms and good sports in public.

Women are now more compelled to speak out against the micro-aggressions that were once merely accepted as a matter of course. Women are starting to push back, en masse, against the inequalities and unfairness that we have faced for years, in everything from pay gaps and employment opportunities, to the support (or lack thereof) young girls face when choosing their path in life, to the very way we use language. We are starting to fight for ourselves; to say, "There is no one way a woman should be, other than equal to a man".

All of this has been cemented here in Ireland, where 2018 is the anniversary of a number



of important turning points that show us the remarkable progress women have made and can continue to make.

This year is the 100th anniversary of Irish women's suffrage through the Representation of the People Act 1918.

This year also marked the 60th anniversary of a landmark Dáil Debate and legislative change that opened the doors of An Garda Síochána to women.

It is a year that opened with women taking to the streets of Dublin and Galway for a Women's March, in solidarity with their 'sisters' in US cities who marched to protest against Trump.

Marches in favour of and against repealing the Eighth Amendment to the Constitution followed, as women continued to demand to be heard.

It is, of course, the year that the Irish people voted overwhelmingly to overturn the country's arguably draconian ban on abortion. Yet, it was

still not enough to make the seventh annual March for Choice unnecessary. As we wait – nearly six months on – for the Government to pass legislation that will usher in safe and legal abortion services in Ireland, women still feel the need to remind the world that we're not going away and that, while the fight may be won, the war is not over.

In honour, then, of our Year of the Woman, we dedicate this issue to the women of Ireland.

We also look at the history behind the suffragette movement in Ireland.

We also focus on challenges women face in today's society and highlight some of the positive changes that it is hoped will make their lives better. Wexford Local Development's 'Are We There Yet?' sets the lead here. That event generated a lot of sound proposals and ideas for the future.

## WOMEN'S AID STATISTICS

In 2017, more than 21,000 contacts were made with Women's Aid. Of these:

- 19,385 disclosed abuse against women.
- 3,552 disclosed child abuse.
- 622 disclosures involved a man telling a woman he would kill her, the children, a family member or himself.
- 756 disclosures involved a man choking, smothering, beating or threatening to beat his partner with a weapon.
- 531 disclosures of stalking, both online and in person.
- 217 reports of assault during pregnancy.



## *Urgent call for reviews of domestic murders*

BY KIRSTY TOBIN

Following the November 23rd release of the Women's Aid Femicide Watch 2018 report, the organisation has called for the introduction of 'Domestic Homicide Review' (DHR) mechanism as a way to save lives.

According to the report, 225 women have died violently in the Republic of Ireland since records began in 1996. Of these, 137 (61%) were killed in their own homes and, where the cases have been resolved, 98 (56%) were murdered by a current or former male intimate partner.

"When women call Women's Aid and tell us that they are afraid for their lives, we believe them. We know just how dangerous domestic violence can be," said Margaret Martin, director of Women's Aid. "Femicide by an intimate partner must be accepted as a fact of life for women. Women should be safe in their homes and in their relationships. And we must recognise the strong connection between the killing of women and domestic violence."

That connection is the driving force behind calls for DHRs, as many of the risk factors in domestic violence homicide cases overlap with behaviours and tactics used by perpetrators of domestic

violence, including physical abuse, threats to kill, abuse during pregnancy, jealousy, stalking and surveillance, and controlling behaviour.

In a system of DHRs, information gathered during reviews would be used to create tools and recommendations to improve prevention, risk assessment and risk management strategies currently used by agencies tasked to protect women and children, such as An Garda Síochána, social workers and the HSE.

### **TRENDS & PATTERNS**

Explaining why this system is so essential, Dr Jane Monckton Smith, a forensic criminologist and expert on domestic violence, said: "Murder is never a 'crime of passion'... If we keep explaining these murders away as spontaneous crimes without looking into the trends, patterns and histories, we will remain in denial. But, more importantly, we will be letting down past and future victims."

The launch of the report came two days before the start of the international 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence campaign.

This year, the Women's Aid 16 Days campaign is focusing on femicide, breaking the pattern of male violence, believing survivors, and challenging myths, and the call for DHRs will play a big part in that. But it is also a time to honour the women who have already been lost.

Ms. Martin put this best: "We publish our Femicide Watch Report 2018 to pause, and to remember and reflect on the lives lost to male violence. Women's Aid stands in solidarity with families, friends and communities of women murdered, and with the many women currently living with abuse."

### **24 HOUR FREEPHONE HELPLINE**

If you or someone you know is experiencing domestic violence, call the Women's Aid 24-Hour National Freephone Helpline on 1800 341 900

Trained staff and volunteers are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to provide support and information.

As before, we tested the line and our call was picked up immediately.



## 16 Days campaign going since 1991

The annual 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence campaign took place from November 25th to December 10th. The dates were originally chosen so that it would start on International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and end on Human Rights Day.

Over the span of those 16 days, the international community also observes International Women Human Rights Defenders Day (on November 29th).

The 16 Days campaign was started in 1991 to challenge violence against women and girls.

The global campaign raises awareness, calls for changes and aims to send a strong message that violence is not acceptable and that women and children have a right to live lives free from violence, abuse and fear within their homes and relationships.

The campaign also aims to challenge the victim-blaming culture that surrounds domestic violence, and dispel some of the myths that are still believed about its causes and appropriate responses.

The symbol of the 16 Days campaign is a #BelieveHer purple ribbon.

Internationally, the theme this year was on the 'Ending of Gender-Based Violence in the World of Work'.

In Ireland, the Women's Aid 16 Days campaign was focused on femicide\*, breaking the pattern of male violence, believing survivors, and challenging myths.

*\* Femicide is the killing of a woman or girl, in particular by a man, on account of her gender.*

# WEXFORD: Women & Development

**VOTE LIKE YOUR  
RIGHTS DEPEND  
ON IT.**



*Wexford secondary school pupils played an important, on-stage role in the 'Are We There Yet?' conference.*

PHOTO: Ger Lawlor

**T**here is “a rich legacy of activism among Wexford women” and, in organizing the ‘Are We There Yet?’ event, WLD wanted “to examine the local context, 100 years after women were given the right to vote.”

The names of “strong Wexford women of the early 20th century” - Una Brennan, Maire Moran and the Ryan sisters of Tomcoole - are remembered with pride in the county.

The 2018 event was part-funded through the Social Inclusion & Community Activation Programme (SICAP). Women are one of the programme’s named target

groups and equality is a theme that cuts across all actions under the programme.

WLD noted that, “While women actively participate in a wide range of organisations at a community level, and within families, research shows that when women and girls prosper, entire communities in

Ireland succeed.”

‘Are We There Yet?’ aimed to encourage the empowerment of women to take on more leadership roles in local communities.

There are 76,000 women in Co. Wexford, according to the last census.



*Siobhan O'Brien, Wexford Local Development.*



*Dubhain Kavanagh, Esther Brennan and Anna Marie Bergin - all Wexford Local Development staff*



*Michael Wall, chair of Wexford Local Development, speaking.*



*Minister of State Paul Kehoe, TD, James Browne, TD, and Cllr. Barbara Ann Murphy, at the conference.*

PHOTOS: Ger Lawlor



## More women likely on County Councils after local elections next May

- Wexford women promised free training to run for election

- Announcement made at equality conference

**BY SIOBHAN O'BRIEN  
& ALLEN MEAGHER**

**I**f expectations in Wexford are replicated in other counties, there could be a surge in the number of women elected as local councillors.

Wexford has only four female County Councillors at present, but that might soon change, according to speakers at a high-energy equality event held in Wexford's Spiegeltent, in October.

With their eyes fixed on local elections next year, and beyond, the conference asked 'Are We There Yet?'. The question relates to women's advancement in this, the centenary year for women in Ireland getting the right to vote.

There are 34 councillors on the county council and, at present, 88% of councillors are male.

At the conference, which was addressed by Emily Logan, Chief Commissioner of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, it was announced that training is to be provided free-of-charge to anyone from Wexford thinking of standing in next year's local elections.

"There is a long road to travel before women and girls in Ireland are truly living in an equal society," noted keynote speaker Ms. Logan. "Although Ireland is fourth in the world on the UN development index, we fall to 23rd place when it comes to gender equality."

Ms. Logan drew attention to increasing levels of female participation in politics. She pointed to the 94% increase in voter turnout by women aged 18 – 24 in the referendum on the 8th Amendment.

"I think we will see this year historically as an important one when we look back. Whether it is in politics, sport or in society, we have never spoken like this before. You can feel the energy, the passion and the creativity of the new generation of young women who are more than ready to pick up the torch," she said.

The training for Wexford's future aspiring politicians - of all hues and cries - will be provided by an organisation called 'Women for Election', in collaboration with Wexford Local Development which



Wexford speakers hoped the event would light a spark locally. We'll see in 2019.

PHOTO: Ger Lawlor

**"We cannot accept progress in 50 year slots. The struggle for equality is not just for movie stars."**

organised Saturday's event.

Ciairín De Buis, CEO of Women for Election, said it has trained half of the country's city and county councillors and 40% of the most recently elected female TDs in the Dail. Confidence is one of the big issues.

"Through our training, we help women on the confidence side," said Ms. De Buis. "And we can help in

terms of the culture within parties."

"Women for Election will be working with Wexford Local Development early in 2019 to make this support available within the county," she confirmed.

Councillor Barbara Anne Murphy described her own experience as one of the four female councillors currently sitting on Wexford County Council: "When I started

in politics I never expected that we would need quotas. Here we are in 2018 and we are not anywhere near equal."

She acknowledged that "most women aren't prepared to go through what you have to go through to get elected. However, we're going to have to be the ones to do this."

She hopes she will "live long enough to see the day when we will have full equality."

Nora Furlong, a youth worker from New Ross district, stressed the political importance of community work and non-formal education.

Michael Wall, chairperson of Wexford Local Development, said, "The battle against misogyny is a battle for all of us because a misogynistic society degrades us all. Men must step up to the plate. We cannot accept progress in 50 year slots. The struggle for equality is not just for movie stars, the women who are most exploited are the ones with the least power to resist. The future is in our hands. I hope our work will speed this along."

Polly Connors and Elizabeth Berry are Community Health Workers with Wexford Local Development and their stories showed how participation in the labour force impacted on their lives.

"My family and my job are the two most important things in my life. Both of them have brought me through a lot of grief and hard times," said Polly.

Elizabeth spoke of her pride and satisfaction being "part of a team of Traveller women who really want to help their community to move forward".

Both women encourage people in their community to embrace education and to think of a career.

The event was chaired by Madeleine Quirke, former CEO of Wexford Chamber of Commerce. Other speakers included positivity coach Jacinta Kitt, secondary school students from across the county and more.

The conference drew to a close to the strains of the Rising Voices Community Choir.

## EQUALITY IS CORE TO WEXFORD LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

Wexford Local Development (WLD) organised the 'Are We There Yet?' event.

The community organisation is committed to making a positive impact by promoting employment, inclusion, education, supporting enterprise and addressing inequalities in Wexford.

Its core purpose is "to enable specific individuals and communities to achieve a better social and economic quality of life by improving their opportunities for employment and by addressing inequality".

WLD is one of a network of 48 Local Development Companies.

W: [wld.ie](http://wld.ie)

# WEXFORD: Women & Development



## 'So, will YOU run?'

Ciairín de Buis is asking

What can we do? Ciairín de Buis, CEO of Women for Election is clear about what needs to happen to boost women's representation in politics:

"We need to encourage and help women along. When Women for Election was set up, the founding members set off around the country and met women involved in local community politics – those on school boards, in Tidy Towns, Local Community Development Committees and so on.

She said that when they asked people if they would consider running for election, the reaction more often than not was 'Oh no, that's not for me!'

She said, "We should be encouraging and helping other women along and ask ourselves and other women - 'Will you run?' A constant thread amongst women who were elected was that they were asked directly to run."

So, will you run?



The event was held in a Spiegeltent. PHOTO: Ger Lawlor

## STUDENTS SEEK EQUAL PAY



A group of female students made powerful contributions. They were from secondary schools in Wexford including Kennedy College and St. Mary's in New Ross, Loreto and Presentation Secondary Schools in Wexford and Meanscoil Gharman in Enniscorthy.

They addressed issues such as women's under-representation at senior level in politics and banking, equal pay, the sharing of care responsibilities between men and women, sexual harassment and the situation of lone parents.

## HAD TO GO TO COURT TO STUDY MATHS

Ciairín De Buis, CEO of Women for Election, recalls how she first became involved in politics:

"I grew up in a feminist household, both my parents worked outside the home, they shared household duties. I had grown up assuming that there were no barriers for me as a woman, I assumed that the world was the same as it was at home. I learned at school that it wasn't, I had to threaten to take a court case to be allowed to do honours maths.

"The first time I could vote was in the general election in 1992 when 20 women were elected. I assumed that there would be rapid progress from there on. Obviously I was wrong."

## #METOO - IT BEGAN IN 2006

Although it really took off in 2017, the Me Too movement actually began in 2006. African-American civil rights activist Tarana Burke was inspired to use the phrase after being unable to respond to a 13-year-old girl who confided to her that she had been sexually assaulted. Burke later wished she had simply told the girl, "Me too."

## THE DIFFICULTY OF BEING A FEMINIST

One student spoke of the difficulty in describing yourself as a feminist: "For some, being a feminist no longer means standing up for your own rights and equality. It has become twisted into meaning 'man hater'. This insane stereotype is causing women to be insecure about being a feminist".

Ms. Logan agreed: "Young women feel nervous to identify as a feminist as it's viewed as being anti-men."

However, it is important to get more women to speak out, as women experience higher rates of poverty and they are more likely to be a single parent: "They are (also) more likely than men to be a full time carer, to work part time and to work in low paid jobs and all of these factors affect them as they move into their older years".



James Browne TD., Wexford Working Mens Club members and Sandra Walsh, WLD.

PHOTO: Ger Lawlor



## EMILY LOGAN: HOW FAR WE HAVE COME!



*Emily Logan, Chief Commissioner of the Irish Human Rights & Equality Commission.*

PHOTO: Ger Lawlor

Are we there yet?  
“I think we know the answer,” Emily Logan said. She pointed to “the positives”, that Ireland is 4th in the UN Development Index.

“At the most fundamental level, Ireland is considered a good place to grow up and grow old,” she said. However, our stature internationally falls dramatically to 23rd place when it comes to gender equality. Nonetheless, we should not forget how far we have come as a society.

“It’s too easy to forget the basic rights and protections that we have in Ireland today,” said Ms. Logan. “In 18 countries around the world, husbands can prevent their wives

from working.”

Here, up to 1973, women had to give up their jobs when they got married. Contraception was not legalised until 1980. This country

***It matters that  
only 22% of TDs are  
women. Ireland trails  
behind Afghanistan.***

did not allow divorce until 1996.

“This history is within touching distance. The transformation of Ireland for women has

truly been remarkable and in a short space of time,” said Ms. Logan.

Seeking basic rights around bodily integrity were starting points for this change.

Yet, young women feel nervous to identify as feminists as it’s viewed as being anti-men. We need to encourage women to speak out. Often, it’s very difficult for women in Ireland to talk about what is happening in their own homes – familial abuse.

Who makes the decisions about what happens in our country, our economy? It matters that only 22% of TDs are women. Ireland is only just ahead of Eritrea and trailing behind Afghanistan.

## Ideas from the floor

### - QUOTES FROM THE PUBLIC AT ‘ARE WE THERE YET?’

- We need more coaching by women for women, in public speaking and presentation skills. We need more courses for women to build confidence.

- Men can represent women also; get women’s issues on the agenda with male representatives.

- Encourage and assist schools to give girls and boy’s access to books, podcasts and resources promoting feminist and equality issues.

- Promote female roles, starting on a local level.

- Ensure there is a quota of women on Local Community Development Committee, on the board of Wexford Local Development

and in other decision making spaces.

- Voter education programmes are a must.

- Put gender equality on the school curriculum.

- We need more women’s groups in Wexford.

- We need to create a culture that involves women. Work with young males – they need to be part of the solution.

- Women in the workplace need to respect each other, not bitch. Stay united.

- Politics is about people – showcase how women’s participation in politics will make Ireland a better country to live in.



# Soldiers in

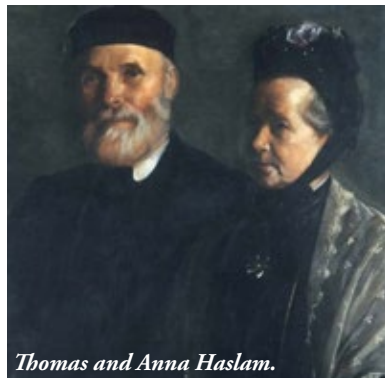
## - 100 years of women's

BY KIRSTY TOBIN

On 25 May 2018, 2,153,613 people turned out to vote in a landmark referendum to repeal the Eighth Amendment to the Irish Constitution, which banned abortion within Irish borders. A massive 72.1% of women who voted on that day voted in favour of repeal, utilising their democratic right in order to take ownership of their bodies and take autonomy over their futures.

And to think – a little over 100 years earlier, that wouldn't have been possible.

As a woman in Ireland in 2018, it's easy to take certain rights for granted: the right to work, even after marriage; the right to marry (and divorce) whomever we choose; the rights of an EU citizen; and the right to decide if, when and how to have children. It's easy to forget that, 100 years ago, those rights didn't exist for us. Without the right to vote, they still wouldn't.



*Thomas and Anna Haslam.*

In the history books of Ireland, women's fight for equal representation tends to take a back seat to the fight for Home Rule and independence, so you'd be forgiven for thinking the suffrage struggle never really hit Irish shores – but you'd be wrong.

### DAUNTLESS CRUSADERS

In 1847, Anna Haslam founded the Dublin Women's Suffrage Association with the sole purpose of securing women the right to vote in parliamentary elections and, in 1866, the first petition for suffrage

was signed and delivered to parliament (by John Stuart Mill).

While this first bid was unsuccessful, progress was made later in the 19th century as the Local Government Act 1894 was signed into law. It gave women who owned property of £10 in value the right to vote in local elections, but not parliamentary.

Around the turn of the century, the suffrage movement faded into the background as politics and issues of government captured the media's attention. This was a challenging time for Ireland's suffragettes, as close ties with their English counterparts led many Irish men to view them as being allied with 'the enemy'.

As the eyes of the media turned to the proponents of Home Rule, the suffragettes kept up their own campaign. In 1908, Hanna and Francis Sheehy-Skeffington (who later founded suffragette newspaper *The Irish Citizen*), and Margaret Cousins, founded the Irish Women's Franchise League, with the aim of championing women's suffrage as a component of Home Rule.

In these early years of the 20th century, membership of suffragette organisations ballooned to over 3,000 people. There were a lot of voices calling for universal voting rights, but no one was listening – it was the Easter Rising and male political voices who were capturing attention. Although the women tried to align themselves with parties who would support the cause, this was not a tenable long-term solution and the movement struggled.

### WELL DONE, SISTER SUFFRAGETTE

Then, on 6 February, 1918 – following a period of political turmoil during the Great War and a hard-fought and decades-long campaign by British and Irish suffragettes – the Representation of the People Act 1918 was brought into British law (which Ireland, at the time, still fell under), ushering in universal suffrage for the first time.

While, on the surface, the act was a positive step forward for women in the then British Isles, it was not without conditions.

The 1918 act gave women the



right to vote, but only for women. It extended to all men above the age of 21, while women could only vote if they were above the age of 30, either owned property worth £5 or more (or had a husband who did), or had a university education. While the 1918 act started women on the path to voting rights, and as the 100th anniversary in Ireland being granted the vote, true suffrage was not achieved until the birth of the Republic in 1922, and even then, many women remained out of the political process.

The Proclamation of the Republic stated in 1912 that the Republic guaranteed civil liberty, equal opportunities to all. Although the external struggle has been called into question in recent years, particularly the debate surrounding the right to repeal the eighth amendment, it held true in one respect: the Constitution of the Republic, 1922, Article 12, gave Irish citizens over the age of 21 the right to vote in Dáil elections and initiatives.

From 1922, women could vote, but without



# petticoats

## men's right to vote



years of women's right to vote.

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of the Constitution of Ireland in 1937 many other rights – the right to serve on a jury, work in industry or work after marriage – were stripped away by an arguably regressive and conservative government. Yet it was the right to vote that eventually enabled women to once more claw back that equality that had been chipped away.

Voting rights gave women power to challenge legislation and even play a part in creating it. Between 1937 and today legislation enacted

by successive Dálaí (elected by women and including women) overturned the ban on women working after marriage, led to Ireland joining the EU (then EEC), allowed divorce, abolished the death penalty and legalised same-sex marriage.

This summer's abortion referendum brought women another step closer to the equality that suffragettes fought for all those years ago.

What will we vote for next?



VOTAIL100: Catherine Martin TD; Pat The Cope Gallagher TD; Leas Ceann Comhairle; Senator Ivana Bacik, chairperson of the Vótáil100 Committee; Senator Denis O'Donovan, Cathaoirleach; Senator Alice-Mary Higgins; Fiona O'Loughlin TD.

## HISTORY ONLINE & IN YOUR LIBRARY

Online, the 'Irish Times' has compiled its reports on 'How Women Won the Vote' and they are all available here: <https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/heritage/century/century-women-and-the-vote>

With an opening article by former President, Mary Robinson, the articles record "the long road to equality" and the coverage includes mini-biographies about the historical figures who fought for women's rights.

The same information and more is available in an 'Irish Times' booklet that runs to 62 pages. Download here for free: [https://www.irishtimes.com/polopoly\\_fs/1.2544010.1456142763!/menu/standard/file/How%20women%20won%20the%20vote.pdf](https://www.irishtimes.com/polopoly_fs/1.2544010.1456142763!/menu/standard/file/How%20women%20won%20the%20vote.pdf)

Better still, call to your library to learn more about the history of suffragettes in your area. You may be surprised how much material is available there. Nowadays, you can read, borrow or browse to your heart's content for free. There is no fee to join the library anymore.

## FINALLY, ANNA HASLAM GOT TO VOTE, AGED NEARLY 90

Anna Haslam and her husband Thomas were suffragists, not suffragettes. Suffragists believed in peaceful, constitutional campaign methods. In the early 20th century, after the suffragists failed to make much progress, a new generation of activists emerged. These women became known as the suffragettes, and they were willing to take direct, militant action for the cause.

In 1918, aged almost 90, Anna went to the polls accompanied by fellow-activists who gathered around her to honour her commitment and the victory.



# PEOPLE & PLACE: 19 venues and grow

## Kerry Social Farming's ven - all visitors well fed & inform



Sean Kelly MEP was among those to take the tour. He is pictured here with George Kelly, a cousin and a social farmer.

### SEAN KELLY SENSES MEN'S SHED-STYLE GROWTH

MEP Sean Kelly may have a point when he predicts that social farming is going to - no pun intended - "grow".

"Like the Men's Sheds, it's going to grow and grow because it brings out the best in everybody," he said. "You couldn't have a better sense of Christianity, spirituality, generosity, humanity than you have here."

"This is something that is very special," he continued, cautioning prospective social farmers to bear in mind that it may "not be wise to put a time restriction" on it, as a bond often develops between the farmer and their family and the participant(s).

He flew in from Strasburg at 3.30am, but rose a few hours later to go and see Rena's farm. His "friend and cousin" George Kelly is one of the social farmers involved.

He had "special praise" for the two local development companies in Co. Kerry, for co-ordinating the social farming project over the past five years.



The wall says it all. MEP Sean Kelly and author/farmer/film-maker Lisa Fingleton.



"And the lettuce grows this big!" Organic farmer and now social farmer Rena Blake shows



Antoinette O'Sullivan and Bronagh Enright made a presentation to representatives who visited Kerry Social Farming. Staff in Ballina, Co. Mayo (pictured right) are now



# ry open day 2018

ned



ares her knowledge with visitors during Open Day.



es Paul Geraghty and Lisa Keveney from the Department of Rural and Community Development when they  
hopeful a birdie will take the hint and make a home outside their office. We'll keep readers posted!

## VOICES OF SOCIAL CHANGE

### FARMER FAVOURS NO-PAY MODEL

George Kelly has seen social farming develop in Kerry from the beginning. He currently takes five participants to his farm and believes that the voluntary social farmer model works best.

"I'm a host farmer since 2013 and we feel we have the perfect model. We choose the voluntary model and we think it is the best model to follow," he said.

The original seed-funding came through the predecessor programme to SICAP, in 2013. Later, through CEDRA, two community workers were employed, although the host farmers are not paid for participating.

"We've overcome great hurdles in the past and I'm sure we will in the future," said Mr. Kelly. "We have the experience now to help roll it out to other local development companies.

He currently hosts visits by three people from Kerry Parents and Friends and two people coming through the St John of God organisation.

He is in awe of the participants:

"I admire them for their commitment, ability and honesty. Working with them, I have the firm belief that we can achieve a lot more.

"I believe there's no better way to help yourself than to take a step forward in helping others," he added.

### MARTIN SHEEHAN'S BEST DAY OF THE WEEK

Martin Sheehan (pictured below) goes to George Kelly's farm every Monday.

Martin's mother Eileen said, "That's really the only good day that he has every week."

The farm has a black, pot-bellied pig and it sits outside the front door waiting for Martin to arrive, much to everyone's amusement.

"I clean outhouses, feed the calves, clean up and collect eggs. We get tea and biscuits," said Martin.

Should more farmers embrace social farming, we asked John. "They should," he said.





# PEOPLE & PLACE: 19 venues and grow

## OPEN DAY AN EYE-OPENER

- Any kind of farm can be a social farm

**F**arming - though often inherited - is a vocation, a pathway through life, as well as a way to make a living. Now, imagine sharing farming life with people who could do with a break but who may also not know a thing about farming. It's called social farming and it's changing lives.

In October, 'Changing Ireland' attended an Open Day on Rena Blake and Lisa Fingleton's farm outside Ballybunion, organised by Kerry Social Farming (KSF).

Over 150 people attended and Ballybunion Men's Shed ran a 'Park and Ride' operation to ensure there were no hold-ups. They did so with the same positive attitude and commitment (it lashed rain) that recently earned them a European Citizen Prize.

Mags O'Donohue, a participant, showed how social farming brought her on a grand tour of the country. "We love farming, we love being out and through social farming, I've been to the Ploughing Championships, to Donegal for the Pride of Place awards, to a conference and to the Dail," she said.

A social farmer called Eamon spoke warmly about his experience. It took a while for the penny to drop, for him to see what a big deal social farming was for the participants. There are also benefits for the farmers (and families).

KSF staff member Julie Brosnan told us how social farming can help to strengthen rural communities. It has clear benefits for participants and also reduces rural isolation.

So far, KSF has 31 participants and 19 farms involved.

While that might not seem many, given County Kerry's population, Ms. Brosnan

argued that it is very good value for money, that KSF is "very low-cost" and that they "stretch" their funds.

She more than proved her point. Someone going to a social farm in Kerry could end up on a farm rearing dairy or beef cattle, sheep, suckler calves, or find themselves in a community garden or organic garden, whatever suited best.

"We're not tied to old ideas of farming," said Ms. Brosnan.

"We have a dairy farmer with 70 cows and a traditional sheep farmer from the Black Valley, but we also have a community garden in Abbeydorney, Maura Sheehy's Cottage Flowers near Tralee and an orchard farm.

"Some farms take only one participant. It can take a farmer a little time to get used to it. Gradually the numbers build up. Recently, a number of new farms have joined, including Rena and Lisa's farm here," she said.

To widen its reach, KSF collaborates with the Local Links service and with Rural Social Scheme projects.

"In all aspects of our work, we're supported by the two local development companies. They collaborate with Kerry County Council, the HSE and others," said Ms. Brosnan.

**W:** kerrysocialfarming.ie

**Note:** There are different models of social farming. In the scheme operating in Kerry, farmers are not paid. Under the other popular model which takes an all-island approach, the farmers do receive payments. Each approach has its own advantages.



Speaker, Cllr. Aoife Thornton, with her son Conal. The Fine Gael councillor is Cathaoirleach of the Listowel Municipal District.

- STORY/PICS BY A.M.

## DEPARTMENT GUESTS WISH TO RETURN

**P**aul Geraghty is the Principal Officer for the Social Inclusion and Communities Unit in the Department of Rural and Community Development.

He and colleague Lisa Keveney were guests at the Open Day in Kerry.

Mr. Geraghty was among those to speak in a marquee set up for the visitors:

"I know there have been reports written, but when you spend ten minutes listening to a farmer involved in this explain the benefits, then you really understand," he said.

"What you have here is inspirational and we're delighted to support it," he added.

While they had been briefed beforehand, he and Ms. Keveney were impressed to see for themselves the "scale" of the project.

"It's a credit to you all and it's been an eye-opening day," said Mr. Geraghty.

He promised to return with more staff to learn more.



Lisa Keveney from the Department of Rural and Community Development listens keenly to Julie Brosnan of Kerry Social Farming.



# PUBLIC DAYS ACROSS ISLAND



There is a push on to teach the public about the benefits of social farming and committed farmers in a half-dozen counties have held public open days.

Two in the West to recently throw open the gates are John F. Geraghty's farm in Williamstown, Co. Galway and Anna and Oliver Dixon's organic farm near Claremorris in Co. Mayo.

Across in Ballinamona, Kilmuckridge, Co. Wexford, Shelly Berry's farm held an open day in September.

Others farms to open include John Murphy's in Kildinan, Co. Cork, Campbell's farm in Plumbridge, Co. Tyrone, and Tommy Earley's farm in Mountallen, Co. Leitrim.

*Oliver & Anna Dixon welcomed visitors onto their social farm in Claremorris, Co Mayo, in October. They are currently hosting visits by two Syrian refugees who were previously farmers. Photo courtesy of South West Mayo Development Company who helped organise the Syrians' placements.*

## ANTOINETTE O'SULLIVAN, FARM PARTICIPANT

If anyone still had any doubts about the value of social farming, participant Antoinette O'Sullivan won them over when she spoke at the Kerry Social Farming's Open Day, at Rena Blake's farm.

Ms. O'Sullivan comes to the farm once a week and she outlined how it works.

"I love farming", she declared. She said they usually start the day with a cup of tea with Rena who explains to her and fellow participant Bronagh what work they have to do.

"The work is good. I love coming here," she said.

She told about improvements in her health.

"I have a condition called Apert Syndrome and constantly planting and moving my hands in the soil is good for them. It is exercising my fingers."

The place is also peaceful.

"There is a lot of space...if you're having a bad day, you can go for a walk and you'll be happy going home," she said.

There's no rushing for the gate when time is up: "When we finish our work, we usually stay on longer," she admitted.

The bond formed between farmer

and participants is at the centre of the venture.

She urged new social farmers in Kerry to "sign up today" and promised that they wouldn't be sorry.

As for herself, "My confidence has grown. It's getting me out of the house and I'm learning something new. It's fun, it's not serious, but we do do our work," she said.

Rena testified that seeds that Antoinette and Bronagh planted grew much better.

"They took the time. I rushed," she recalled.



*Antoinette also urged people to think of buying organic food only: "Organic is the nicest of all. You probably pay extra for it, but it's well worth it," she said.*

## WAITING LIST TO JOIN FARMS

The Saint John of God (SJOG) organisation plays an important role in social farming in Kerry. Just over half of all the social farming participants there at present are supported by the organisation.

"Every week, we have 17 people working on farms across the county," Michelle Angdon of SJOG in Kerry said at the Social Farming Open Day in Ballybunion.

Her organisation was involved with Kerry Social Farming from the start, in 2013.

She said it was "very timely" because in 2012 the HSE had produced 'New Directions' - draft standards for people to become more independent, respected, healthy and safe and more involved in their communities.

"The Kerry Social Farming project was perfect for what we were trying to achieve and we keep hearing participants speaking so positively about it.

"The lads tell us what they like - being out and about, that it's good for their wellbeing, their mental health, they get a sense of achievement and independence, they're learning all the time. The big thing they talk about is the host farmer and their families... they get a sense of social belonging," she said.

In recent years, social farmers have welcomed people with more significant disabilities, including blindness.

### WHAT DOES 'SAINT JOHN OF GOD' DO?

'Saint John of God' is an international Catholic social care organisation that employs hundreds of care workers in Ireland to perform roles provided for in some other countries by the state.

SJOG says that it strives for "a society inspired by hospitality, where the potential of each individual is reached". It operates across the country and receives over €130m in HSE funding annually.

In Kerry, it currently organises training, employment and social and residential programmes for over 300 people with intellectual disabilities.



*John O'Connor, SJOG participant, with Mary Healy, social farmer.*

### FROM CENTRAL TO LOCAL

Until 2006, SJOG had 160 people travelling from all over Kerry to access services in a central location in Tralee. That year, they began to move the services and people back into their own communities. Today, SJOG has centres in Beaufort, Caherciveen, Castleisland, Dingle, Kenmare, Killarney, Killorglin, Listowel and Tralee.

"So, we have people available all across the county," said Ms. Angdon.

Naturally, transport is a challenge, but 'Local Links' helps. In Kerry, the subsidised, community-based transport programme has organised volunteer drivers in cars to bring people to places, including social farms.

SJOG now has a waiting list of participants wanting to try out social farming.

**For more information, contact:** Saint John of God Kerry Services, Monavalley, Tralee, Co Kerry. T: 066-712-4333.



# PRIDE OF PLACE: 2018 awards

They came from Spanish Point, Tulsk, Buncrana, Baldoyle and beyond

## 700+ gather to see 49 groups win



*Tipperary-Comhairle-na-nOg award winners at the Pride of Place ceremony in Cork.*

**T**here wasn't a hotel room to be found in Cork city in mid-November as 700 people descended on the Leaside beauty spot for the 16th annual Pride of Place Awards.

This is the biggest Community and Voluntary Sector awards event of the year and the organisers hired Cork City Hall to seat the audience in style. Many groups revelled in the opportunity to let their hair down and celebrate the fruits of hard volunteer work. The awards recognise their invaluable work in communities across the island of Ireland.

Each year local authorities across Ireland submit nominations to highlight local groups that make "an outstanding contribution to supporting and strengthening their local community". The stand-out projects are visited so that judges can see for themselves who shines the most. No easy task.

The competition began as a Co-operation Ireland programme and is now the largest event recognising community development achievements.

"It is important to recognise the role of local authorities, North and South, who work closely with their communities to support inspiring voluntary initiatives," said Michael Garvey, Chief Executive Officer of sponsor IPB Insurance.

Including runners-up, there were 49 winning groups this year.

**W:** <https://prideofplace.ie/2018-winners/>

### MAIN AWARDS

**Pop. 0 - 300 Winner:**

- Ray, Co Donegal

**Runners Up:**

- Ballintubber, Co Roscommon
- Kilmeedy, Co Limerick

**Pop. 300-1000 Winner:**

- Balla, Co Mayo

**Runners Up:**

- Coolaney, Co Sligo
- Killeslin, Co Laois

**Pop. 1000-2000 Winner:**

- Rathdrum, Co Wicklow

**Runners Up:**

- Quin Village, Co Clare
- Rathfern, Co Antrim

**Pop. 2000-5000 Winner:**

- Bunclody, Co Wexford

**Runners Up:**

- Maghaberry, Co Antrim
- Thomastown, Co Kilkenny

**Pop. over 5000 Winner:**

- Shannon Town, Co Clare

**Runners Up:**

- Buncrana, Co Donegal
- Youghal, Co Cork

### CITIES COMPETITION

**Urban Neighbourhoods / Villages with a population under 1000**

**Winner:** Douglas Street, Cork

**Runner-up:** Bloomfield, Belfast

**Urban Neighbourhoods / Villages with a population of 1000 - 2000**

**Winner:** Market Area, Belfast

**Urban Neighbourhoods / Villages with a population over 2000**

**Winner:** Ballyfermot, Dublin

**Creative Place Initiative**

**Winner:** Community Centre for Music and the Arts, Dublin

**Runner-up:** Limerick Civic Trust

**Community Wellbeing Initiative**

**Winner:** SPACE, Newry



# The Maharees win a special award

## THE CITATION

“Notable not just as an area of great natural beauty, but distinguished by a dedicated local group working to ensure a sustainable approach to conservation that is exemplary and a model for others to follow.”

## THE PROJECT

The Maharees Peninsula was one of six places to win a special award.

The Maharees, together with Tralee Bay to the east and Brandon Bay to the west, make up an extensive complex of coastal habitats and support a rich variety of wildlife, including Ireland's endangered Natterjack Toad.

It is an area of outstanding natural beauty and the Maharees has one of the best examples of a tombolo in Ireland. (A tombolo is a bar of sand or shingle joining an island to the mainland).

The peninsula is part of the 'Tralee Bay and Maharees Peninsula, West to Cloghane Special Area of Conservation (SAC)' and is designated as such under the EU Habitats Directive for a variety of habitats that it supports.

Maharees Conservation Association CLG is a coastal community group which engages a wide-ranging network of volunteers.

Working collaboratively with agencies and



stakeholders such as Kerry County Council, NUI Galway, NPWS, Clean Coasts and Taisce and IT Tralee, its work is devoted to protecting the coastline and natural heritage of the Maharees, raising awareness of the cultural and ecological importance of the area and ensuring

the viability of the Maharees community.

**Community Contact: Helena Switzer**  
E: hswitzer@kerrycoco.ie



**Runner-up:** Rainbow Child and Family Centre, Derry

### Communities Reaching Out Initiative Winner:

- Children's Grief Centre, Limerick

### Runner-up:

- 4th Port Dodder Sea Scout Group, Dublin

## SPECIAL CATEGORIES

### Creative Place Initiative Winner:

- Muintir Chrónáin – Áras Chrónáin, Clondalkin, South Dublin Council Area

### Runners Up:

- K-Fest, Co Kerry
- The Fitzzone Foundation, Co Armagh

### Community Wellbeing Initiative (Holistic) Winner:

- Comhairle na nÓg Liatroma
- Runners Up:**
- Ceol le Chéile, Older Persons Council, Co Donegal
- Fit Towns Ballinasloe and Accessibility, Ballinasloe, Co Galway
- Westmeath Age Friendly Programme, Co Westmeath

### Community Wellbeing Initiative (Targeted) Winner:

- Gary Kelly Cancer Support Centre, Co Louth
- Runners Up:**
- Erris Branch of the Irish Wheelchair Association, Co Mayo
- Waterford & Tramore Arch Club

### Community Tourism Initiative

### Winner:

- Moneygall Development Association, Co Offaly
- Runners Up:**
- Kells Regional Economic Enterprise, Co Kilkenny
- Tusk Action Group, Co Roscommon

### Housing Estates Winner:

- Garden City & Crestwood Estates, Co Meath
- Runners Up:**
- Ard Mc Gill Estate, Co Donegal
- Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Estate Management Fora

### Islands and Coastal Communities Winner:

- Inis Méain, Co Galway
- Runners Up:**
- Baldoy, Co Dublin, Fingal Council Area

- Spanish Point, Co Clare

### Urban Neighbourhoods Winner:

- Corduff, Co Dublin, Fingal
- Council Area Runner Up:**
- St Mark's Parish Tallaght (St Mark's Youth Club), South Dublin Council Area

### Special Award Winners:

- Maharees Coastal Area.
- Open Circle Arts, Co Kilkenny.
- Wicklow Hospice Foundation.
- Clonegal, Co Carlow.
- Cork Street Pastors.
- Blackwater Women's Group, Co Kerry.

### Council Community Engagement Award:

- Meath County Council



# Community workers consulted

Changing Ireland heard in October about ups and downs in the implementation of the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme. Mostly ups.

Views were aired at meetings of community workers around the country during the Autumn.

There is no shortage of case studies to show the programme works and it is reaching more community groups than ever before. The statistics bear this out.

Statistics also show, however, that Travellers should be getting more support through the programme.

Complaints about the quantity of paperwork involved continue to be aired by community workers.

It was also pointed out that asking people have they got a criminal record before you begin working with them immediately puts up a barrier. Community workers felt this obligation compromised them.

Pobal organised the meetings with hundreds of frontline workers and those overseeing the SICAP at local level. The aim is to see what is working best and how to improve the programme.

The consultations were carried out in co-ordination with staff from the Department of Rural and Community Development.

Between now and 2022, the SICAP programme is worth €190m to communities.

The last of 17 workshops in the series took place in Co. Mayo, on October 25th.

- By AM



*People working to support individuals and community groups through the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme have been meeting recently all around the country. Their aim is to see what is working best and how to improve the nationwide programme. The programme spend this year was €38m.*

## Story-telling time

The fact that community workers and others have been consulted was welcomed.

In discussions, it was agreed that not enough people in communities have heard of the SICAP programme, including people who directly benefit from it.

A participant said, "We are hopeless at explaining what SICAP is trying to do."

Another said, "You could spend time with a beneficiary, but at the end they still wouldn't know it was through SICAP."

Promotion of the work in 2019 is planned.

"Our number one audience is our community," as one community worker

pointed out.

Colleagues made the following points:

- We need to link individuals' stories to the policies that effect them, for example like Oxfam do.

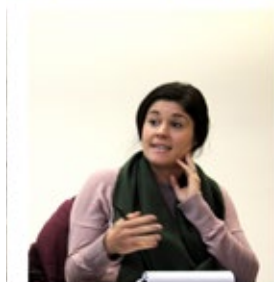
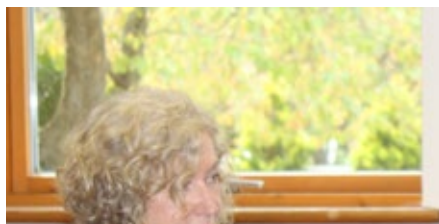
- The testimony from people who have benefitted is what matters.

- The programme is backed up by community development principles, but that is not appreciated.

- We need to get people on the ground saying what they feel the programme is good for.

- People don't relate to SICAP the acronym. The name is even a barrier.

Discussion followed about rebranding 'SICAP' or renaming it.



Frontline community workers tell it as they see it. Photo on right: Majella O'Connor of Limerick City Community Development Project & Mary Blackmore of the PAUL Partnership.





# SOCIAL ENTERPRISE EXPO SCORES IN THOMOND

*- Networking no longer a dirty word*

About 170 people from around the country gathered in Thomond Park's exhibition space on November 15th - not to see local man Keith Earls weave his magic, but to show off their own work and hear ideas on how to improve it.

All the participants were involved in social enterprises and this national event was, for many an opportunity to network.

Networking is no longer a dirty word. Time was specifically given during the expo for people to meet and mingle.

The speakers - and many stands - highlighted how social enterprise is delivering positive change in communities across Ireland.

Speakers came from Dublin, Waterford, Mayo and Limerick, giving both urban and rural perspectives.

Afterwards, attendees visited five social enterprises in Limerick City.

The event was organised by the PAUL Partnership, a Limerick city project, in association with the Irish Local Development Network (ILDN). It also received support through the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme and the Local Community Development Committee.



*Michael Gleeson from the PAUL Partnership Limerick led in co-ordinating the national event. Fifteen Local Development Companies provided direct support while others participated.*

## **MORE INFO:**

[www.drcd.gov.ie](http://www.drcd.gov.ie)

[www.paulpartnership.ie](http://www.paulpartnership.ie)

[www.ildn.ie](http://www.ildn.ie)



*Speakers (l-to-r): newly-published author Dr. Senan Cooke, consultant Lorraine Corcoran, Dr. Sarah Miller from the Rediscovery Centre, Ballymun, and Helen Fitzgerald from PAUL Partnership. Kenny Deery from Achill and UL's Dr. Briga Hynes also spoke.*

A community radio station's main aim is community development. Many also operate as social enterprises.

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# Looks like a Happy New Year for Social Economy

NICK MURPHY reports

THE Social Economy Programme will receive a new name. From January it will be called the Community Services Programme and in future will lean towards social rather than commercial benefits.

And the Programme will move from FAS control to administration by Area Development Management (ADM) starting from New Year's Day 2006. ADM will administer the programme on behalf of the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.

Senior civil servant David Brennan made the announcement on 23rd November 2005, at a Seminar in Mullingar (organised by the Wicklow Social Economy Network).

Close to 200 people attended the seminar and they elected delegates to form a group to set-up a national network and to consult with the Department during the changeover. Up to now, FAS have administered the Programme on behalf of the Department of Trade and Enterprise.

At the seminar, Mr Brennan announced a number of welcome changes to be implemented immediately. He assured projects that:

- The enterprise element which is central to some projects will remain.
- The stipulation that participants be over 35 years of age and 3 years unemployed will be scrapped.
- Clearer easier reporting processes similar to those used by CDPs will be introduced including alignment of audits with projects financial years.
- Movement to multi-annual funding will happen over time.
- There are no plans to cut budgets. All projects will receive funding in January. ADM hope to make all payments to projects by the first 15 working days in January. All payments outstanding from FAS at 31/12/05 will be honoured by ADM in '06. Payments will be quarterly in advance from January.

Mr. Brennan also said discussions are taking place with the Department of Finance with a view to (a) revising social economy managers' wages which have not increased in four years and (b) building in an element to keep pace



David Brennan.

with inflation for participant wages.

He said that new Employment Criteria may only require about 70% of participants to be from the live register.

In addition finance may be available for a small number of additional projects, no more than 20 to 30 nationally, later in the year.

In answering questions from workshops, Mr Brennan speculated that adjustments may be made to the programme to reflect the wide range of projects in the programme and that projects presently funded through the Social Economy Programme might in future move to other funding streams if that seemed appropriate.

CDPs around the country may take the opportunity to lobby the department to slant the new programme criteria towards areas of social need. Now is the time to do so.

*From: 'Changing Ireland', Issue 16,  
Winter 2005, p12.*

**2018: €44m  
to over 400  
projects  
delivering  
invaluable  
goods &  
services to  
communities**

In 2018, approximately €44m in funding was provided under the Community Services Programme (CSP) supporting over 400 projects.

Many of the projects run community halls. Many more provide services that would not otherwise be delivered, such as meals on wheels. A third strand of funding goes towards supporting projects that help unemployed people from disadvantaged or stigmatised communities into employment. The programme specifically seeks to support Travellers, ex-prisoners, recovering drug mis-users and people with disabilities.

Qualifying projects must follow a social enterprise model and the programme contributes towards staff costs.

Currently, the CSP provides €19,033 per full-time equivalent worker and €32,000 per manager.

In 2018, the programme directly co-funded approximately 1,650 full-time equivalents and 300 manager positions.

CSP projects are most often found in disadvantaged communities where public and private sector services are lacking.

The programme is managed by Pobal on behalf of the Department of Rural and Community Development.



# Community Services

## REVIEW FOR POPULAR NATIONAL PROGRAMME

The Department of Rural and Community Development is undertaking a review of one of the country's most important development programmes, the Community Services Programme (CSP).

Set up in 2006, as the successor to the Social Economy Programme, this is the first time it is being formally reviewed.

Currently, there are over 400 projects funded under the CSP and the number of projects has grown since the programme became the Department's responsibility last January.

The funding allocation for the programme in 2018 was €44m. The Projects receive funding, as a contribution to the cost of a manager and a specified number of full time equivalent positions. The Programme supports community companies and co-operatives involved in everything from community radio to meals-on-wheels to tourism ventures and more.

Through funding these projects, the programme aims "to provide local social, economic and environmental services through a social enterprise model."

### DEEMED SUCCESSFUL

An independent body will carry out the review on the Department's behalf and will take approximately six months. The review will inform decisions on the future shape and structure of the programme and will examine

"the value added to services being delivered to vulnerable communities that would not be delivered otherwise".

"A formal review will ensure the programme is more closely aligned with current Department and Government policy and better placed to meet community needs," said the Department.

### SCOPE INFLUENCED BY PUBLIC

The Department recently carried out an early consultation on the scope of the review. The public were given the opportunity to give their opinion in picking out topics and issues the review should focus on. A report on this is to be published in January.

"The Department is now proceeding to tender to engage a third party review body. The formal review is expected to commence in February," said the Department.

A steering group will be established to oversee the review and to provide strategic oversight and direction.



ABOVE: The fabulous Millennium Centre in Caherconlish. If it wasn't for the CSP programme, many community halls around the country would struggle to stay open.

This group will comprise:- an independent chair, a single representative from the Department, one from Pobal, a representative for social enterprise, community representatives and an independent external advisor (with academic or other expertise).

#### For more about the review:

<https://drd.gov.ie/community/community-services-programme/community-services-programme-information/>

#### For more the CSP currently:

<https://drd.gov.ie/community/community-services-programme/>



## Community Radio Castlebar

CRCfm's new studio in Thomas Street, Castlebar, Co. Mayo, was opened recently by the Minister for Rural and Community Development, Michael Ring.

The station receives almost €90,000 annually through the Department's Community Services Programme.

Many other community radio stations also receive CSP funding and, every week, across Ireland, 2000 radio volunteers broadcast to 170,000 people in 21 fully licensed stations and 30 aspirant stations.



## INTERNATIONAL: Democracy &amp; Development

## SMALL COUNTRY, BIG HOPES - THE GAMBIA

## ALLEN O'MEACHAIR REPORTS FROM THE GAMBIA

When a country overthrows a brutal dictator after 22 years, as The Gambia did in December 2016 elections, the only way is up.

Until two years ago, the dictator sowed distrust in every community. Who was a spy? You never knew. The repercussions of voicing criticism could be deadly.

People are now much more at ease within themselves, their homes and their communities.

Demba Jawo was a journalist whose life was under threat, but the tables turned when democracy won out; he was appointed The Gambia's Communications Minister for the first 15 months of the new government.

"Now there is a lot of hope in the air," he told 'Changing Ireland' earlier this year. "You go out in the street, you see everybody is happy with the new dispensations, the freedom of speech and freedom of movement."



Journalist and former minister, Demba Jawo

In 2016, Gambian people found their voice, the dictator lost the presidential election (being too arrogant to rig the vote) and an alliance of West African countries ensured there was a peaceful transfer of power. Once

Yahya Jammeh heard Senegalese jets fly over the presidential palace, in January, 2017, he knew the game was up.

Diaspora Gambians, many pining to go home, followed every dramatic turn, on social media.

But, the historic ousting of one of Africa's brutal dictators did not get quite the international coverage it merited, because global media were pre-occupied with unfolding events in the USA.

Adama Barrow, a compromise candidate representing the hopes of all the main parties, was sworn in the day before Trump took office on the other side of the Atlantic. One democracy restored; another lost. 'The Smiling Coast', as the tourism department like to call it, was smiling once more.

"However, expectations are much higher than what is possible," warned Minister Jawo.

People are now placing trust, again, in community organisations and - as well as EU aid - diaspora Gambians are setting up charities to help their fellow citizens in one of the world's most materially impoverished countries.

I met two Gambians, separately, who returned with good intentions.

Claudius Taylor, a lawyer based in London, runs 'Banjul Open Box': "We send law books to the Ministry of Justice and Gambia University. We reach out to Gambians through education

and other social welfare means."

Musa Sanyang, now living in Leipzig, Germany, is involved in a charity called 'Schools for Gambia'.

"We have built, renovated and expanded numerous schools, sent and distributed containers of school furniture, school supplies, textbooks, clothing and other donations to The Gambia," he said.

I lived and worked in The Gambia, via APSO\*, during the mid-1990s when the country's media practitioners were to the fore pushing for democracy, human rights, freedom of expression and proper governance. Without those basics, community development and national development could not progress.

Jammeh had his critics arrested, tortured and sent murder squads after those whose reporting he feared most. Media houses were burnt down.

His face was on billboards everywhere - quickly torn down when he lost the presidency - and also on banknotes that are slower to replace. He married and divorced a series of women, had homes in various countries, a fleet of flash cars and insisted on being addressed as His Excellency Sheikh Professor Alhaji Dr. Yahya A.J.J. Jammeh Babili Mansa.

Jammeh was a thief, a torturer, a mass murderer and he twisted religion to suit his criminal pursuits. His legacy is now being dissected at truth and reconciliation hearings deemed essential to the country's recovery.

Gambians still complain plenty about the new government, but it was democratically elected and people genuinely enjoy freedoms they had not known since 1994, if they were even born then.

### But what of community life for ordinary people?

It's a small country, the smallest on the continent, where everyone feels they know each other. Villages still held ceremonies to mark births, comings-of-age, marriages and deaths. Soccer matches and wrestling continued.

However, in regards to community development, people need to be open and trusting of each other.

"You could not trust anyone but your family and closest friends," said Lamin Sanyang, a civil servant who (quietly) opposed the regime throughout.

Jammeh fired village Alkalos and community leaders who did not support his regime. In 2012, he began to terrorise communities by sending out a team of witch-doctors with military backing. Communities, including elders, were humiliated.

This helped to drive people to oppose his rule, said Mr. Sanyang. Abroad, tens of thousands of Gambians forced into exile began to organise via social media in protests that helped ultimately to topple him.

Mr. Sanyang brought me to a naming ceremony in his native Busumbala, Western Division. He said, "We have freedom now to do and speak what we want."



All smiles at a naming ceremony in Busumbala.

However, the Gambia's version of Tidy Towns has for the time being collapsed. Monthly 'set-settal' clean-up operations became an involuntary activity under Jammeh.

"During Jammeh's time it was kind of forced onto people. There was a period from 9 o'clock to 1pm when no vehicles were allowed to move and shops were closed. People were not happy with the situation," said Minister Jawo.

After Jammeh's demise, the new government struggled to get communities involved in clean-ups and earlier this year it gave up, realising people had enough of top-down mandates.

"When this government came to office we tried to continue with these cleaning exercises, but people would just stay at home. So, we thought the best way is to allow people to do it on their own on a voluntary basis. We abandoned the idea of trying to do it the way Jammeh used to do it."

Bottom-up community development is now stronger in The Gambia. For example, successful clean-ups were organised in December by a civil society group to tackle plastic polluting the country's beaches.

"People are now free to do things on their own, without having to look behind them to see if somebody is watching them all the time," said Minister Jawo. "With freedom of speech, freedom of movement and everything, people are encouraged to take matters into their own hands and do things exactly the way they want them done. So, community development is definitely picking up very fast."

Communities groups are now free to organise, hold gatherings and fundraise. There has been a sunburst of activity the length and short breadth of the country.

An example of one of the many local community groups to launch this year is Sanjonding Youths Association for Development (SYAD). Its president, Mustafa Saho (left) told me, "We want the community to reflect on the role of youths participation in community





# THE SMILING COAST



development.”  
The youth-led community organisation had done charitable works for some years, but without ever formally launching. So, SYDA ran a high profile event to highlight its successes to date and to “inspire and create partnerships with other

organisations.”

Mr. Saho said, “Youths are the cornerstone for any community development and we have to be centre-stage as far as community development is concerned. We want to take ownership and take responsibility in our communities. We want to make sure that all community facilities are better available and that people benefit from these facilities.”

Afterwards, he heralded the launch as a great success “because it fostered the spirit of unity, tolerance and understanding amongst the young people of Sanjonding community. This is one of our top priorities in the peace and reconciliation process at the community level.”

The news media - locally and nationally - are central to recovery. In Fajara, I called to ‘The Point’ newspaper and met former colleagues of murdered co-founder Deyda Hydara.

Jammeh in particular sought to silence reporters who asked how he enriched himself. He said his millions came “from Allah”, but his blasphemous claim was at Gambian people’s expense; many died escaping poverty and violence on the treacherous journey to Europe.

Later, with Lamin Sanyang, I visited the street corner where Mr. Hydara was killed. Previously, people who visited this place were followed and beaten. Now, the talk is of one day erecting a statue, or symbol, in tribute to Hydara’s peaceful resistance.

The printed newspapers that survived are now prospering, relatively speaking, and are very sincere in purpose.

Pap Seine, a 2010 World Press Freedom Hero, was arrested “many times” and witnessed much suffering as the other co-founder of ‘The Point’. His vision and optimism is however undimmed.

Looking forward, he sees his newspaper spawning a television station. Yet, what remains uppermost in his mind is that The Gambia “upholds democratic values”. This is more important to him than any profit margins.

“We are working tirelessly to promote good governance, respect of human rights and the

rule of law,” he said.

‘The Point’ - while critical - enjoys good relations with Barrow’s government.

“There is no censorship, thank God,” he said.

While a minority still support Jammeh’s old party, most Gambians, having won freedom through the ballot box and in street protests, share Mr. Seine’s values. Today, ‘The Point’ is the most popular newspaper in The Gambia.

Mercifully, community radio stations survived the cull of the mainstream media. They stuck to safe subjects such as giving agricultural advice. Now, they are expanding in number and in confidence and training is provided to their broadcasters by the Gambia Press Union (GPU).

“We recognise community radio as very important,” said Sam Mendy, head of the GPU’s School of Journalism.

In 2017, 25 broadcasters from ten stations received training. The stations are seen as “a mouthpiece for rural communities and as a tool for development”, according to Yusupha Bojang, co-ordinator of the Network of Community Radios of The Gambia.

Mr. Mendy showed me around the journalism school, uselessly flicking the light switch in the studio. It remained dark. One of the biggest challenges facing the government is improving the electricity supply.



From the early 1990s to now, The Gambia’s population has almost doubled (to over two million people) but average income remains low (€100 per month, said a bank clerk). The Gambia ranked as the 13th poorest country in the world in 1995 and was in much the same position when Jammeh was deposed. Unemployment is high and the country is over-reliant on agriculture and tourism.

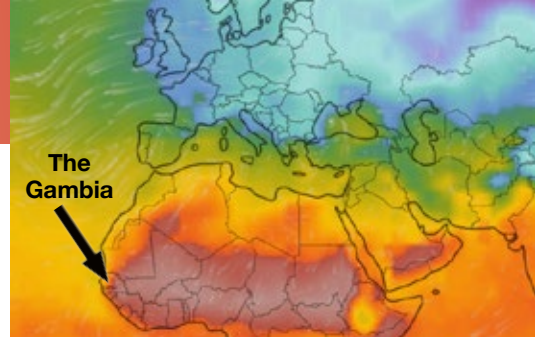
But, change is coming. Diaspora remittances are now a significant help to the economy, the EU has promised more aid and specific European countries promise investment.

While Jammeh reintroduced the death penalty, pulled The Gambia out of the Commonwealth and declared the country an Islamic state, all three positions have been reversed under Barrow.

Peace has come, but recovery takes time.

(TO BE CONTINUED - Part 1 of 2)

*\* From 1974 to 2001, an Irish government body called the Agency for Personal Service Overseas supported the placement of volunteers abroad.*



*Sally Badjie and children.*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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- My thanks to former colleagues, in particular Lamin Sanyang for being my guide.
- Photography by Allen Meagher and Lamin Sanyang.
- For more, visit: [meaghersbar.wordpress.com](http://meaghersbar.wordpress.com)



**SIMON CUMBERS  
MEDIA FUND**



# New law will finally cap moneylending

By Olive McCarthy and Noreen Byrne\*

We very much welcome progress to enact legislation that will cap the rate charged by moneylenders, thereby ending the exorbitant fees charged currently on loans to 330,000 people, or 7% of the population.

The second stage of the Private Member's bill brought by Pearse Doherty, Sinn Féin's finance spokesperson, passed in the Dáil, on December 13th.

If Deputy Doherty's cap is introduced, it would bring Ireland into line with other EU countries who already cap the interest rates charged on loans. In Spain, anything above 24% is unacceptable. At present, moneylenders here charge up to 187%.

We endorse the suggestion from Michael McGrath, TD (Fianna Fail) that legislators should invite moneylenders such as Provident, as well as MABS and the Social Finance Foundation, to speak to the select committee to hear all the different perspectives. In the debate, he noted: "We must try to establish why so much business is being done in this sector. When one looks at the figures, it is hard to believe so much business is being done with

licensed moneylenders. It is big business and it is very profitable."

All sides recognise the importance of providing alternative sources of credit to replace the service currently provided by moneylenders and we are heartened to hear politicians call for "a reliable alternative to licensed moneylenders". We are pleased to see Fine Gael - indeed all parties - recognise that the key is to get the credit union movement to commit to serve the people currently serviced by moneylenders.

Half of credit unions are currently taking part in a Personal Micro-Credit (PMC) scheme and the other half will, we hope, now strongly consider joining the scheme.

Moneylenders lead many people into a poverty trap. It is a mark of a mature democracy that we are finally clamping down on this social injustice. As our study conducted on behalf of the Social Finance Foundation showed, borrowers in Ireland currently owe over half a billion euro to moneylenders.

\* Olive and Noreen are staff members of UCC's Centre for Co-operative Studies.



**ABOVE: Minorca, Spain.** A former employee with a major moneylender put it to 'Changing Ireland' - would Credit Unions give loans to people who are broke so they can go on holidays? "You hear folks giving out on Joe Duffy Liveline, but that's how people on the dole go on holidays to Spain. Everyone needs a break."

*More to follow in our next edition.*

## 330,000 people owe average of €566 to moneylenders in Ireland

**W**ithin nine months, 330,000 people on low income in Ireland are expected to pay back €153m to 39 moneylending companies. The loans are subject to interest rates of up to 187%.

These are some of the findings taken from a report launched on November 14th and titled 'Interest Rate Restrictions on Credit for Low-income Borrowers'. It also found that:

- Most customers of moneylenders are female, in the lower socio-economic group and aged between 35 and 54 years of age.

They owe an average of €566 each to be paid back over a 9 month period.

There is no doubting the popularity of the quick and easy loans, but most countries curtail the interest rates charged.

- In Ireland, all 39 licensed moneylending firms are currently allowed to charge interest rates of up to 187% excluding collection charges, and up to 287% including charges (known as Annual Percentage Rates - APRs).

- 31 of the 39 firms are categorised as home collection credit firms. Home collection credit firms involve APRs of up to 287% and calling to the customers' homes on a weekly basis to collect loan repayments.

Despite the extremely high-cost of moneylending credit, customers report satisfaction with the convenience and ease with which they can borrow from and repay moneylending firms.

- The remaining firms are catalogue companies. Catalogue companies typically have lower APRs than home credit companies, with interest rates in the region of 43% - 72%. Almost 50% of the customers of moneylending firms are customers of catalogue companies.

**The research was carried out by Mary Faherty, Olive McCarthy and Noreen Byrne from UCC's Centre for Co-operative Studies.**

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